

Dear Representative Stern:

Juniata Valley Audubon, a local conservation organization with 450 members in Blair County, is opposed to the budget agreement announced last week which contains significant cuts in funding for environmental agencies and an unprecedented diversion of funds meant for environmental programs to balance the state budget.

We strongly urge you to support a budget that

- adopts a severance tax on natural gas production;
- leaves decisions regarding leasing of State forest lands to the discretion and stewardship of the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources;
- returns the largest portion of any funds derived from the severance tax and from the leasing of State forest lands for natural gas drilling to programs to restore and protect our natural resources and to local governments that must bear the burdens of host drilling operations;
- restores funding to the departments of Environmental Protection and Agriculture and county conservation districts to help meet the federal Clean Water Act mandates to cleanup the Chesapeake Bay Watershed and Pennsylvania's commitments to reduce nutrient pollution made in the Chesapeake Bay 2000 Agreement and most recently in the Chesapeake Executive Council's milestones, and to review and enforce permits; and
- restores full funding — \$10 million — to the Resource Enhancement and Protection Program (REAP) to help farmers install conservation practices.

For the first time in modern Pennsylvania history, we face a budget proposal which dramatically decreases financial support for environmental restoration and protection programs. This budget should not be considered done until adequate funds are provided to help the Commonwealth meet its environmental obligations and clean water mandates.

Sincerely,

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